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ABSTRACT

The percentage of students of all races and ethnicities lost from public school enrollment has worsened in Texas in recent years. This paper presents major findings from a recent attrition study by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). It also restates recommendations from the IDRA policy brief, "Missing Texas Youth --Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools," and looks at dropout information from the Texas Education Agency (TEA), including the new 'leaver' record system. The attrition rate is 27 percent higher than it was in 1985-86, when it was 33 percent. Since 1985, more than 1.3 million students have been lost from Texas public schools due to attrition. Black, Hispanic, and male students were the most likely to be lost from public high school enrollment. After discussing what the TEA report does and does not say about student attrition, the paper presents recommendations for improving state dropout accounting. Some of the recommendations include: revising the goal of the state dropout program; modifying state policy requirements; modifying the state education agency procedure for computing the actual state longitudinal dropout rate; requiring that a school district's longitudinal dropout rate be tied to the state's accountability system; and requiring that the state education agency collect and disseminate information on local districts' dropout prevention and recovery efforts. (SM)

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INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

IDRA Newsletter

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Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools Still High

Roy Johnson, M.S.

Inside this Issue:

- **Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program gets results**
- **Dropout and attrition rates worsen in Texas**
- Immigrant education collaborative
- Early childhood education event
- National dropout prevention conference

In Texas over the last 13 years, the percent of students of all races and ethnicities lost from public school enrollment has worsened. It was 33 percent in 1986. Today, it is 42 percent.

The latest attrition study by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) shows that 53 percent of Hispanic students and 48 percent of Black students were lost from public school enrollment, compared to 31 percent of White students, between 1995-96 and 1998-99 in Texas. The attrition rate is the percent of students lost from enrollment

"Schools, communities and policymakers can and must work together to ensure that we provide quality education for *all* students," commented Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA's executive director. "We cannot remain in denial about the severity of the dropout problem and refuse to take the actions necessary to keep students in school," she said.

To follow are the major findings of IDRA's latest annual attrition study, which presents data for the 1998-99 school year by statewide total, by county, and by race and ethnicity. This article also restates recommendations from the IDRA policy brief entitled, *Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools* that was released earlier this year. The article also looks at dropout information reported by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) including the new "leaver" record system.

Findings of IDRA's Latest Attrition Analyses

Two of every five students from the freshman class of 1995-96 left school prior to their 1998-99 graduation from Texas public high schools. IDRA research shows that 42 percent of the state's 1995-96 freshman class were lost from public school enrollment by 1998-99, the same percentage of students lost between 1994-95 and 1997-98 (see box on the next page).

Though the attrition rate has remained relatively stable over the last few years, the rate is 27 percent higher than in 1985-86 when the attrition rate was 33 percent.

Longitudinally, the attrition rate in Texas public schools has increased by nine percentage points from 1985-86 (33 percent) to 1997-98 (42 percent). Numerically, 151,779 students were lost from public high school enrollment during the period of 1995-96 to 1998-99 as compared to 86,276 during the period of 1982-83 to 1985-86.

The 1985-86 school year marked the initial year that IDRA conducted the state's first comprehensive assessment of the number and percent of Texas public school students who are lost from public school enrollment prior to graduation. Thirteen years following the release of its first comprehensive report in October 1986, IDRA continues to document the number and percent of the state's students who leave school prior to graduation. IDRA advocates dropout prevention and accurate dropout data collection and reporting by school districts and the state education agency.

The latest study by IDRA reveals that

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Longitudinal Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools, 1985-86 to 1998-99

Race-Ethnicity Group	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1991-92	1992-93	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	Percent Change* From 1985-86 to 1998-99
Native American	45	39	37	47	39	40	39	42	44	43	42	25	-44
Asian/Pacific Islander	33	30	28	23	22	21	21	18	18	20	21	19	-42
Black	34	38	39	37	38	39	43	50	51	51	49	48	41
White	27	26	24	30	19	22	25	30	31	32	31	31	15
Hispanic	45	46	49	48	48	48	49	51	53	54	53	53	18
Total	**33**	**34**	**33**	**31**	**31**	**34**	**36**	**40**	**42**	**43**	**42**	**42**	**27**

* *Rounded to nearest whole number.* Figures calculated by IDRA from the Texas Education Agency *Fall Membership Survey* data.
Rates were not calculated for the 1990-91 and 1993-94 school years due to unavailability of data.

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attrition rates continue to be alarmingly high. Major findings of IDRA's 1998-99 attrition study indicate the following.

- From 1985-86 to 1998-99 more than **1.3 million students have been lost** from Texas public schools due to attrition.
- **Two of every five students** enrolled in the ninth grade in Texas public schools during the 1995-96 school year failed to reach the 12th grade in 1998-99. An estimated 151,779 students, or about 42 percent of the 1995-96 freshman class, were lost from public school enrollment by 1998-99.
- **Black students and Hispanic students were more likely than White students to be lost** from public school enrollment in 1998-99. Fifty-three percent of Hispanic students and 48 percent of Black students were lost from public school enrollment, compared to 31 percent of White students. Hispanic students were 1.7 times more likely than White students to leave school before graduation while Black students were 1.5 times more likely than White students to leave school before completing high school.
- From 1997-98 to 1998-99, **three racial-ethnic groups had a decline in attrition rates.** Native American students had a decline from 42 percent to 25 percent, Asian/Pacific Islander students had a decline from 21 percent to 19 percent, and Black students had a decline from 49 percent to 48 percent. The attrition rates for White students and Hispanic students remained constant, 31 percent and 53 percent, respectively.
- **More males than females were lost** from public high school enrollment. Between 1995-96 and 1998-99, 45 percent of males were lost from public high school enrollment, compared to 38 percent of females.
- **The percent of students lost from public high school enrollment has increased by**

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The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, © 1999) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program: Still Getting Great Results

Josie Danini Supik, M.A.

This past school year began a new initiative of the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. In July 1998, The Coca-Cola Foundation awarded the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) a new grant to take the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program into the next millennium.

Beginning in 1984, with support from Coca-Cola USA to IDRA, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has given thousands of Valued Youth a chance to be special, to contribute and to achieve.

In 1990, The Coca-Cola Foundation awarded a five-year grant to IDRA to take the program to 10 elementary and secondary schools around the country. IDRA exceeded its commitment by opening the program in 70 schools in 18 cities.

In 1995, The Coca-Cola Foundation provided support for IDRA to expand the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program into 10 new secondary and elementary schools over three years. Again, IDRA exceeded its commitment: the program was in 38 new schools in the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain. In June of 1998, the end of the three-year initiative, the program was in an unprecedented 128 schools, reaching more than 4,000 tutors and tutees that school year alone.

During this last initiative, The Coca-Cola Foundation and IDRA achieved the following:

- A school in Washington, D.C., became our 100th program site.
- 26 new school sites were begun in Great Britain.

A tutor and tutee work together in Chicago Public Schools

"When I walked in the room, they would have these big smiles, and they would all sit up a little straighter in their chairs because I was there...Being a tutor encouraged me to get up and go to school every day."

– a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor in McAllen, Texas

- Four new school sites were begun in Puerto Rico.
- 10 new school sites were begun in Houston.
- 10.7 million people learned about the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program through national and international media coverage, including NBC, *USA Today*, BBC, and *Los Angeles Times*.
- Presentations were made at events of national significance, including the President's Summit for America's Future held in April 1997 with more than 3,000 participants.
- Two new school sites in Atlanta and five new school sites in Chicago were begun in 1997-98.
- Over 98 percent of our Valued Youth tutors stayed in school.

Since 1984, more than 74,500 students, parents, teachers and administrators have been impacted by the program. This impact has been achieved, in large part, by preserving the program's integrity, keeping true to the program's vision: "The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is in the vanguard of education by creating a structure for the valuing of students and families and is a powerful instrument for amplifying their voices, their dignity and their worth." The program's creed is: *All students are valuable, none is expendable.*

In the 1998-99 school year, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program was in 171 secondary and elementary schools in 24 school districts and 20 cities in the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain. More than 1,000 tutors and 3,000 tutees benefitted from the program this year alone. This includes 66 elementary and secondary schools in Great Britain (Birmingham, Greenwich and Kent); four schools in San Juan, Puerto Rico; three schools in Washington, D.C.; two schools in Atlanta; and five schools in Chicago.

Rigorous Evaluation

The evaluation and monitoring activities of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program sites continue to be as rigorous and comprehensive as ever. Each year, the evaluation design has been reviewed by staff with feedback from the sites. Modifications are made to increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and overall quality of the evaluation.

In addition to the pre- and post-test surveys, IDRA has also committed its own resources to effectively evaluate this program, including in-depth interviews and regular monitoring and on-site observations. The evaluation design of this program is a model for dropout prevention and service-learning programs across the country.

1998-99 Program Findings

Student Tutor Profiles: Demographics

During the last school year, slightly more than half of the tutors were male. Tutors ranged from sixth to 12th grade. Most of the tutors (88.4 percent) were Hispanic; 10.7 percent were African American. Almost all of the tutors (96.1 percent) were eligible for the free or reduced price lunch program (a poverty indicator).

One out of three tutors were previously retained once in grade; six tutors had been retained more than three times. The tutors' average age was 15. One out of two tutors had a mother or father who was born in Mexico.

One out of three tutors had changed schools previously. Of those, two out of three had changed schools once or twice. However, some tutors had changed schools seven, eight, nine, even 10 times.

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Student Tutor Profiles: Peers

Two out of three tutors expanded their circle of friendships by the end of the school year; their fellow tutors had become new friends. At the beginning of the school year, two out of five tutors had friends who had dropped out of school, and one out of five had a brother or sister who had dropped out. However, less than one out of 10 tutors say they had ever considered dropping out of school. *At the end of the school year, four out of five tutors felt they had a place in their school, that they "belonged."*

Teacher Coordinators' Perceptions of Tutors

The teacher coordinators were asked to evaluate the tutors at the beginning and end of the school year. They evaluated the tutors in 15 areas, from self-concept to academic achievement. Their pre- and post-test ratings of tutors increased significantly in all areas: self-concept; disciplinary record; academic achievement; attendance; interest in class and school; future goals; ability to socialize with schoolmates; ability to socialize into their school environment; relationship with their parents, teachers, administrators and counselors; their desire to graduate; and hygiene and dress.

Elementary School Teachers' Perceptions of Tutees

Elementary school teachers were also surveyed at the beginning and end of the school year for their perceptions of the tutees. They were asked to evaluate the students who were tutored in nine areas ranging from interest in class to academic achievement. This is the primary means used to evaluate whether or not the tutors had an impact on the children that they tutored throughout the year.

Other methods such as grades and achievement test scores for the older tutees have been used. But, it is difficult to assess pre- and post-test changes in tutees unless the same students were tutored throughout the year. Given that this is usually not the case, any such assessment is deemed inappropriate and unreliable.

According to the elementary school teachers' survey, all of the survey areas for the tutees (self-concept, disciplinary record, academic achievement, attendance, interest in class and school, ability to socialize with schoolmates and into their school environment, and their hygiene and dress) increased significantly after the tutoring.

Quick Facts about the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors improved their academic achievement test scores significantly in reading and mathematics after participating in the program. Their self-concept also improved in all areas: behavior, intellectual and school status, physical appearance, anxiety, popularity, and happiness and satisfaction.

Of 1,066 Valued Youth tutors in 1998-99, only 10 dropped out of school, resulting in a dropout rate of 0.9 percent.

Over half of the tutors spoke Spanish as their first language, and most spoke a language other than English at home.

"The best thing about tutoring is being able to give someone something. I actually taught someone else something, and it felt good."

– Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor in Washington, D.C.

Tutors took field trips to local universities, museums, banks and hospitals.

Tutors interacted with guest speakers including policy-makers, school administrators, hospital staff, judges and law enforcement personnel.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program began in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paolo, Brazil, this spring. "The great insight of this project is that it systematizes a way of working with children considered failures and turns them around in very short time," comments a teacher at Ruy Barbosa Elementary School in Rio de Janeiro.

– Intercultural Development Research Association, *1998-99 Stewardship Report*

Parents' Perceptions of Tutors

At the end of the school year, tutors' parents were surveyed about their impressions of the tutoring experience on their children. The survey was completed by 350 parents (33 percent). The survey is provided in both Spanish and English; most of the interviews were conducted in person.

Most (73.0 percent) of the parents reported a positive change in their child's attitude and behavior regarding school. They attributed the changes to their involvement in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program – changes that included greater responsibility and maturity, greater interest in school, and higher self-esteem. They also noted better grades and self-discipline. Parents reported a positive change in the home with their children helping them more than usual, specifically doing household chores, working on homework, and increasing communication with them around personal problems and school.

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Tutors

IDRA conducts in-depth interviews of a sample of tutors at the end of the year. Below are examples of two case studies. (The student's names have been changed for privacy.)

Brenda's Story

Brenda is an outgoing student who likes to laugh. As a senior at Options in Education High School in McAllen, Texas, 18-year-old Brenda has just finished her second year as an IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor. Because Brenda's mother was only able to complete up to the fifth grade, she encourages Brenda and her two younger brothers to graduate.

Brenda explains that she did not always care about school, "For a long time, the only point to going to school was to get it over with." Brenda believes she has changed since becoming a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor. School is more important to her, she feels that it now has a purpose and

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is "more uplifting." Because Brenda has helped other children, she sees her own brothers as more children she can help.

Brenda finds that she is motivated to do well in other areas of her life: "Being a tutor has gotten me to join other clubs too. I'm in the student government and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and I have a mentor." By joining clubs, she has gained more confidence.

For one hour a day, four days a week, Brenda has been tutoring day care students and first-grade students. She has been teaching them colors, numbers and speaking English: "When I first came to the classroom, the kids didn't understand when I greeted them in English. Now, they speak to me in English all of the time. I know that I had something to do with it."

Brenda will always remember her tutees: "When I walked in the room, they would have these big smiles, and they would all sit up a little straighter in their chairs because I was there."

The teacher coordinator for the school's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program also made a big impact on Brenda. The teacher was always encouraging her to apply to college and fill out financial aid forms.

When asked what she will remember most about being a tutor, Brenda said: "I'll remember all of the commitment and effort we put into it. I know that the kids I tutored will go on with their education. *Those* kids aren't staying behind."

Brenda's mother is also involved in the tutees' lives: "My mom gets excited when the kids make a good grade on a test. She won't let me forget anything about my kids, she even gets them cards for the holidays!"

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has also made a positive difference in the financial situation of Brenda's family. She has been able to help her mother pay the bills and has been able to buy some of her own clothes.

Brenda hopes that because she was always there for her tutees, they will know that if they ask for help, someone will always be there. Brenda knows now what her teachers feel like. She understands the teachers' point of view.

Brenda thinks high school would have been boring without the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. Brenda does not know if she would have graduated from high school without the program: "Being a tutor encouraged me to get up and go to school everyday." She adds: "I really love this program. I think everyone in this school and the world should have it!"

Rich's Story

Rich is an outgoing student with ambitious goals for his future. As a ninth-grade student at Madison High School in Houston, Rich has just completed his first year as a Coca-Cola Valued Youth tutor. Rich's family is very supportive of his participation in the program and encourages his dream of getting a college education. Rich plans to attend college at either Notre Dame or Georgia Tech where he would like to study art. Rich hopes that his passion for drawing will help him to become a professional cartoonist.

For one hour a day, four days a week, Rich has been tutoring fourth- and fifth-grade students. Rich helps the tutees with a variety of subjects including reading, spelling and math. Rich says that he spends the

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Overview of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

In 1984, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) designed, developed and implemented the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program with funding from Coca-Cola USA. It has grown from 10 schools in San Antonio to more than 200 schools in the continental United States, Puerto Rico, England and Brazil.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program goals include

- reducing dropout rates;
- enhancing students' basic academic skills;
- strengthening students' perceptions of self and school;
- reducing student disciplinary action referrals and absenteeism; and
- strengthening school-home-community partnerships to increase the level of support available to students considered at risk of dropping out of school.

Seven important tenets express the philosophy of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

1. All students can learn.
2. The school values all students.
3. All students can actively contribute to their own education and to the education of others.
4. All students, parents and teachers have the right to participate fully in creating and maintaining excellent schools.
5. Excellence in schools contributes to individual and collective economic growth, stability and advancement.
6. Commitment to educational excellence is created by including students, parents and teachers in setting goals, making decisions, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes.
7. Students, parents and teachers must be provided extensive, consistent support in ways that allow students to learn, teachers to teach, and parents to be involved.

Instructional strategies:

- classes for student tutors
- tutoring sessions
- field trips
- role modeling
- student recognition

Support strategies:

- curriculum
- coordination
- staff enrichment
- parent involvement
- program evaluation

The key to the program's success is in **valuing students who are considered at risk of dropping out of school and sustaining their efforts with effective, coordinated strategies.**

For more information contact IDRA at 210-444-1710 or contact@idra.org.

Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: An Excerpt

Pam McCollum, Ph.D.

Editor's Note: "Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative" was published by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) in December 1998. It fills a void by showing educators what is necessary to develop and maintain appropriate programs for secondary level recent immigrant students. The monograph shares the lessons learned from participation in IDRA's Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative (TIEC) project in two sites – a middle school in Houston, with an international immigrant student population, and a border high school in El Paso, with a primarily homogenous Mexican immigrant population. The TIEC was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The following is an excerpt from the concluding chapter.

The story of the Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative (TIEC) project presented here does not chronicle all project initiatives. This monograph presents descriptions of select project initiatives, analyzes factors that enhanced or detracted from successful implementation, and reviews the lessons learned from our participation in the TIEC project. Another aim of this document is to provide educators with basic information and resources on immigrant education to facilitate the implementation and maintenance of successful programs for immigrant students.

Many documents that chronicle the course of educational innovations conclude by providing inventories of program characteristics that should be present in successful programs. Barth (1990) refers to such approaches as "list logic," i.e., if one has all of the things on the list, one will have a successful program, school, administrator, etc. This document purposely avoids such an approach. Instead, it shares the *process of how* certain TIEC program initiatives were implemented and maintained. This shows how programs came to have particular characteristics given a particular context.

While avoiding the "list logic" or recipe approach to designing programs for recent immigrant students, a discussion of how to proceed in the future given our lessons learned is in order. Recommendations for future collaboratives on the education of immigrant students are given in the following section.

The spark that ignited the excitement and advocacy for improving the education of recent immigrant students in the TIEC project was the opportunity the project afforded educators to affect change. The support provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation gave educators the opportunity to improve their schools from within. In most cases, teachers had good ideas about what they wanted to do to improve their students' education. What they lacked was time to interact and a forum in which to build advocacy for immigrant students.

Special programs need to be built into the district structure from the beginning. Absence of district support and advocacy of special programs slows progress.

Teachers had clear ideas about what was best for their own education. Staff development was much more successful when teachers had the freedom to select the topics they wanted to study. Study groups, where several topics of interest were explored, enabled teachers to survey new teaching techniques and select one to focus on in depth. This approach led to a "buy-in" on the part of teachers and ensured they were getting what they *needed* and *wanted*. All too often, traditional staff development satisfies neither of those criteria.

The TIEC project provided a forum where teachers interacted with each other as well as with outside consultants and volunteers to solve their problems. IDRA's model for change engaged project participants in action research to improve the experience of immigrant students at their campus. **Project participants assessed their situation, created a vision and planned how the vision would be realized.**

One lesson learned was the slow nature of programmatic change. This type of project calls for a more realistic expectation about *when* changes should be expected and what is realistic to expect at different stages. Change occurs on many levels, not just in student test scores. **Expecting rapid changes in recent immigrant students' test scores is an unrealistic expectation given the length of time that is required for second language acquisition to take place.** In addition, in the case of older students, many have completed a fewer number of years of schooling in their country of origin than required here. They also may not know how to read.

Common sense dictates that students should learn to read and calculate before grade level curriculum and state-level accountability testing becomes a concern. **For this reason, early program results from standardized tests need to be seen in a different light. The focus should be on documenting growth using multiple indicators and describing the process that contributes to that growth.** Evaluation mechanisms need to be built into educational interventions. These mechanisms should evaluate various dimensions of change in order to reflect accurately the type of effect a program is having on a campus.

A successful early outcome of a program for immigrant students, for example, would be a change in the number of students eligible to take the TAAS test the third year after the implementation of a newcomers center. Teaching non-English-speaking high school students enough English to take the TAAS should be acknowledged as an index of success.

Strategies are needed to speed programmatic change and improve the running of collaborative multipartner educational projects. Perhaps the factor that retarded project progress the most was the bureaucracy of large urban school districts. From the project's perspective, the simple task of tracking students across years of the project

Lessons Learned - continued on page 17

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Seventh Annual

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Join us for the Seventh Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute as we celebrate and get ready to teach a new generation of children.

Plenary and Concurrent Sessions

The institute offers a valuable series of information-packed professional development concurrent sessions that are customized to the varied needs of early childhood educators and administrators. Information on any additional sessions will be available at the institute. The topics for this years' institute include innovative instructional strategies, information about policy issues, and the latest research.

School Visits

Take this opportunity to visit model early childhood centers. School visits provide you with the opportunity to share ideas while seeing them in action. Institute participants will travel to high-performing, high-minority schools in the San Antonio area that are effectively working with diverse learners. Two school visits (one each on Wednesday and Thursday) are available to the first 150 institute registrants on a first come, first served basis. Transportation will be provided.

Institute Sponsors

IDRA is pleased to bring you this Seventh Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute. Supporting IDRA projects include:

- IDRA *South Central Collaborative for Equity* (the equity assistance center that serves Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas) and
- *STAR Center* (the comprehensive regional assistance center that serves Texas via a collaboration of IDRA, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation).

Each of these IDRA projects provides specialized training and technical assistance to public schools. Information on how your campus can use these resources to improve instruction and assessment will be available at the institute and may also be obtained by calling IDRA at 210/444-1710 or by visiting IDRA's web site (www.idra.org).

Hotel Information

The institute will be held at the San Antonio Airport Hilton. The hotel is offering a special rate of $95 per night for a single or double room (plus state and local taxes), based on availability. The hotel reservation deadline for the reduced rate is April 10, 2000. Call 1-800-HILTONS to make reservations. Be sure to reference the Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute in order to qualify for the special rate.

Conference Topics...

Policy
- Early childhood education in the new century: Opportunities for all students
- The role of early childhood education in creating a nation of learners – reflecting on the national education goals

Literacy
- Including fantasy and imagination in the early childhood curriculum
- The language, the teacher and the child: Integrating a harmonious whole
- Creating literacy opportunities at home
- Effective instructional strategies for reluctant young readers

Social Development
- Children's literature: A tool to develop social skills in the early childhood classroom

Child Development
- Developing language, thoughts and values in the early childhood classroom

Multicultural Education
- The use of authentic literature in the classroom: Sharing our values

Curriculum
- Integrating fine arts in the early childhood program: A project approach

Play
- The child's right to play

Research
- Minority students: The latest research regarding their education and their opportunities
- Diversity in the classroom: Implications for the child

Classroom Management
- Managing learning centers

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Attrition Rates - continued from page 2

27.3 percent between the 1985-86 school year (33 percent) and the 1998-99 school year (42 percent). The number of students lost through attrition has increased from about 86,000 in 1985-86 to about 152,000 in 1998-99.

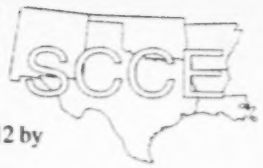
- **Hispanic students made up the highest percentage of students lost** from public high school enrollment in 1998-99. About half (50.1 percent) of the students lost from school enrollment were Hispanic. White students comprised 39.1 percent of the students lost from enrollment and Black students comprised 16.8 percent.

Enrollment and attrition data for the 1995-96 and 1998-99 school years are categorized by race and ethnicity in the box below. Statewide and county attrition rates are presented for the three major race and ethnicity groups on Pages 9 and 10.

TEA's Dropout and School Leaver Report

Texas public schools report dropout information to TEA through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). Under the Texas accountability system, district accountability ratings are based on a combined consideration of district and particular student group performances on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), attendance rates and dropout rates.

House Bill 1010, which became law in 1986, requires that TEA collect and calculate longitudinal and annual dropout rates for students in grades seven through 12. The bill mandates that the state reduce the statewide longitudinal dropout rate to not more that 5 percent of the total student population in grades seven through 12 by the year 2000.



The state definition of a dropout is: A student is identified as a dropout if the individual is absent without an approved excuse or documented transfer and does not return to school by the fall of the following school year, or if he or she completes the school year but fails to re-enroll the following school year (TEA, 1998).

According to TEA, the dropout rate has declined steadily for almost a decade. The reported annual dropout rate was 1.6

Attrition Rates - continued on page 11

1995-96 and 1998-99 Enrollment and 1998-99 Attrition in Texas

Race-Ethnicity and Gender	1995-96 9th Grade Enrollment	1998-99 12th Grade Enrollment	1995-96 9-12th Grade Enrollment	1998-99 9-12th Grade Enrollment	1998-99 Expected 12th Grade Enrollment	Students Lost to Attrition	Attrition Rate
Native American	**794**	**891**	**2,333**	**3,497**	**1,190**	**299**	**25**
Male	385	422	1,171	1,768	581	159	27
Female	409	469	1,162	1,729	609	140	23
Asian/Pacific Islander	**7,272**	**7,037**	**25,822**	**30,949**	**8,717**	**1,680**	**19**
Male	3,799	3,512	13,217	15,902	4,571	1,059	23
Female	3,473	3,525	12,605	15,047	4,146	621	15
Black	**50,395**	**28,126**	**139,112**	**148,003**	**53,652**	**25,526**	**48**
Male	26,410	13,463	69,201	74,557	28,454	14,991	53
Female	23,985	14,663	69,911	73,446	25,198	10,535	42
White	**149,931**	**109,673**	**489,175**	**514,998**	**157,851**	**48,178**	**31**
Male	78,571	55,599	251,026	264,651	82,836	27,237	33
Female	71,360	54,074	238,149	250,347	75,015	20,941	28
Hispanic	**127,016**	**66,241**	**333,168**	**373,378**	**142,337**	**76,096**	**53**
Male	67,798	32,873	171,348	191,736	75,865	42,992	57
Female	59,218	33,368	161,820	181,642	66,472	33,104	50
All Groups	**335,409**	**211,968**	**989,611**	**1,070,825**	**363,747**	**151,779**	**42**
Male	176,963	105,869	505,963	548,614	192,307	86,438	45
Female	158,446	106,099	483,648	522,211	171,440	65,341	38

Figures calculated by IDRA from the Texas Education Agency *Fall Membership Survey* data. IDRA's 1998-99 attrition study involved the analysis of enrollment figures for public high school students in the ninth grade during 1995-96 school year and enrollment figures for 12th grade students in 1998-99. This period represents the time span when ninth grade students would be enrolled in school prior to graduation. The enrollment data for special school districts (military schools, state schools, and charter schools) were excluded from the analyses since they are likely to have unstable enrollments and/or lack a tax base to support school programs.

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association.

Attrition Rates in Texas Public Schools by County and by Race-Ethnicity, 1998-99

County Name	Attrition Rates[1]			
	Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Anderson	52	32	73	40
Andrews	19	21	44	31
Angelina	18	23	42	25
Aransas	57	42	54	45
Archer	•	24	••	22
Armstrong	•	19	50	21
Atascosa	••	12	39	29
Austin	49	24	53	33
Bailey	58	23	49	38
Bandera	100	36	43	38
Bastrop	49	33	56	41
Baylor	100	17	70	25
Bee	47	28	52	43
Bell	43	27	47	34
Bexar	46	28	50	44
Blanco	50	15	53	43
Borden	•	41	33	41
Bosque	41	19	43	24
Bowie	40	24	54	30
Brazoria	49	42	58	47
Brazos	53	26	56	40
Brewster	•	29	24	27
Briscoe	100	••	73	21
Brooks	50	54	47	47
Brown	46	34	45	36
Burleson	33	28	44	32
Burnet	50	39	57	43
Caldwell	49	36	56	46
Calhoun	71	42	71	57
Callahan	100	27	24	27
Cameron	65	34	56	55
Camp	16	27	84	30
Carson	•	4	20	5
Cass	20	20	51	20
Castro	7	••	28	19
Chambers	36	27	36	29
Cherokee	24	33	67	35
Childress	35	16	23	20
Clay	•	23	47	24
Cochran	20	19	45	36
Coke	92	20	49	46
Coleman	••	13	15	13
Collin	44	28	45	31
Collingsworth	29	••	40	15
Colorado	44	17	60	33
Comal	53	33	56	40
Comanche	•	15	43	25
Concho	•	5	15	11
Cooke	56	28	66	32
Coryell	45	30	42	35
Cottle	48	11	19	18
Crane	29	18	36	27
Crockett	•	15	19	19
Crosby	39	0	38	28
Culberson	•	52	30	33
Dallam	••	19	42	25
Dallas	51	32	64	47
Dawson	••	12	42	30
Deaf Smith	••	8	48	35
Delta	23	20	0	37

County Name	Attrition Rates[1]			
	Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Denton	44	34	54	37
Dewitt	65	19	50	35
Dickens	•	••	7	••
Dimmit	••	26	34	32
Donley	12	18	38	18
Duval	•	42	29	30
Eastland	33	26	39	28
Ector	49	32	54	42
Edwards	•	32	17	26
Ellis	44	35	58	40
El Paso	41	26	43	40
Erath	44	29	61	35
Falls	43	34	55	41
Fannin	37	24	56	27
Fayette	39	20	57	28
Fisher	100	10	54	28
Floyd	47	28	45	39
Foard	••	••	48	7
Fort Bend	46	33	58	42
Franklin	46	25	48	29
Freestone	17	22	36	21
Frio	100	••	37	32
Gaines	47	31	43	37
Galveston	48	35	60	41
Garza	50	24	34	29
Gillespie	60	27	57	35
Glasscock	•	22	59	38
Goliad	14	26	42	30
Gonzales	56	30	46	40
Gray	31	19	31	22
Grayson	45	33	58	36
Gregg	44	29	61	35
Grimes	55	34	62	46
Guadalupe	51	36	62	48
Hale	48	18	48	38
Hall	10	••	47	26
Hamilton	•	20	52	24
Hansford	•	11	38	20
Hardeman	••	9	56	18
Hardin	36	28	41	29
Harris	49	32	60	46
Harrison	45	39	70	11
Hartley	•	19	100	30
Haskell	25	2	27	10
Hays	52	34	61	46
Hemphill	100	26	75	50
Henderson	22	29	62	31
Hidalgo	30	22	51	50
Hill	49	26	59	34
Hockley	19	4	38	21
Hood	100	35	51	36
Hopkins	18	24	46	25
Houston	46	26	76	36
Howard	50	27	53	38
Hudspeth	•	12	34	29
Hunt	55	30	62	36
Hutchinson	11	19	40	21
Irion	•	17	41	23
Jack	25	17	11	18
Jackson	20	22	48	30

[1]Calculated by: (1) dividing the high school enrollment in the end year by the high school enrollment in the base year; (2) multiplying the results from Calculation 1 by the ninth grade enrollment in the base year; (3) subtracting the results from Calculation 2 from the 12th grade enrollment in the end year; and (4) dividing the results of Calculation 3 by the result of Calculation 2. The attrition rate results (percentages) were rounded to the nearest whole number.

** = Attrition rate is less than zero (0).

• = The necessary data are unavailable to calculate the attrition rate.

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Attrition Rates in Texas Public Schools by County and by Race-Ethnicity, 1998-99 (continued)

County Name	Attrition Rates[1] Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Jasper	37	28	71	32
Jeff Davis	100	57	40	57
Jefferson	52	29	64	43
Jim Hogg	•	43	27	28
Jim Wells	68	13	37	32
Johnson	54	40	60	43
Jones	3	22	31	23
Karnes	35	28	41	36
Kaufman	58	41	60	45
Kendall	0	38	66	44
Kent	0	27	••	7
Kerr	6	35	61	42
Kimble	•	45	65	51
King	•	46	•	47
Kinney	100	13	37	31
Kleberg	60	18	62	53
Knox	••	20	41	27
Lamar	28	30	38	29
Lamb	19	12	43	30
Lampasas	53	23	57	32
La Salle	91	30	46	46
Lavaca	48	14	66	23
Lee	47	21	64	35
Leon	16	32	42	31
Liberty	35	34	70	38
Limestone	17	27	44	27
Lipscomb	•	11	11	12
Live Oak	64	25	49	38
Llano	•	39	62	41
Lubbock	30	18	46	30
Lynn	29	24	16	20
Madison	42	29	54	35
Marion	38	40	40	39
Martin	••	9	57	34
Mason	••	9	28	13
Matagorda	38	24	50	35
Maverick	•	39	42	42
McCulloch	44	15	41	24
McLennan	43	33	59	40
McMullen	•	35	34	33
Medina	24	27	46	37
Menard	•	42	19	31
Midland	45	21	53	35
Milam	34	26	57	35
Mills	100	17	28	21
Mitchell	8	13	31	20
Montague	•	24	57	26
Montgomery	33	34	56	37
Moore	60	24	56	40
Morris	31	27	72	31
Motley	•	••	35	••
Nacogdoches	46	24	59	33
Navarro	46	33	61	39
Newton	26	30	60	29
Nolan	52	29	50	37
Nueces	51	31	48	43
Ochiltree	•	32	57	39
Oldham	•	6	14	10
Orange	42	30	56	31
Palo Pinto	••	33	53	34
Panola	40	34	61	37
Parker	62	38	63	40
Parmer	72	12	36	28
Pecos	88	14	31	29
Polk	14	45	52	42
Potter	51	36	62	44
Presidio	•	25	45	44

County Name	Attrition Rates[1] Black	White	Hispanic	Total
Rains	39	47	64	48
Randall	68	25	54	29
Reagan	33	4	31	20
Real	•	41	••	32
Red River	33	36	74	37
Reeves	22	18	49	46
Refugio	8	••	49	27
Roberts	•	7	0	7
Robertson	47	32	56	41
Rockwall	42	40	60	43
Runnels	29	16	48	29
Rusk	33	29	51	32
Sabine	36	36	64	36
San Augustine	35	21	0	28
San Jacinto	48	47	56	47
San Patricio	57	35	50	45
San Saba	•	26	46	32
Schleicher	•	3	36	20
Scurry	1	22	47	30
Shackelford	•	15	••	13
Shelby	36	18	64	27
Sherman	•	••	38	1
Smith	46	29	63	38
Somervell	•	27	38	28
Starr	•	24	48	48
Stephens	51	26	67	36
Sterling	•	15	••	8
Stonewall	43	20	52	30
Sutton	•	13	33	24
Swisher	7	12	48	28
Tarrant	49	33	59	41
Taylor	36	29	56	35
Terrell	•	34	••	4
Terry	70	15	48	37
Throckmorton	•	3	67	12
Titus	52	25	71	44
Tom Green	48	21	53	35
Travis	60	34	69	52
Trinity	36	36	78	40
Tyler	17	18	24	18
Upshur	31	30	63	32
Upton	0	9	42	27
Uvalde	•	19	52	43
Val Verde	22	31	47	44
Van Zandt	55	28	54	31
Victoria	46	29	60	47
Walker	58	28	71	44
Waller	41	31	67	42
Ward	57	32	39	37
Washington	55	17	56	31
Webb	•	44	40	41
Wharton	41	16	52	34
Wheeler	••	12	28	12
Wichita	49	38	57	42
Wilbarger	19	16	61	29
Willacy	••	11	47	44
Williamson	47	31	56	36
Wilson	43	25	45	33
Winkler	8	36	40	37
Wise	68	29	44	32
Wood	5	25	60	25
Yoakum	48	15	41	30
Young	35	22	50	24
Zapata	•	53	26	28
Zavala	••	61	47	47
Texas	**48**	**31**	**53**	**42**

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Attrition Rates - continued from page 8

percent in 1996-97 and in 1997-98 down from 6.7 percent in 1987-88. See the box on Page 11 for data from the two most recent reports.

Besides IDRA's annual reporting of the magnitude of the dropout problem and the need for accurate dropout data, the inaccuracy of the counting and reporting was underscored by the July 1996 review of TEA by the Texas state auditor.

As a result of inaccurate calculations and unverified counts, the state auditor estimated that the 1994 actual dropout rate was more than double the reported rate. As recently as 1998, the state auditor stated that underreporting of dropouts must be addressed by TEA.

This year, TEA attempted to track the status of students in grades seven to 12 over a one-year period through district-submitted reports. In May 1999, TEA released its first dropout and school leaver report entitled, *1996-97 and 1997-98 Returning and Non-Returning Students in Grades 7-12*. The new report summarizes school leaver information for individual districts with enrollments of 100 or more pupils. It provides counts and percentages for returning and non-returning students, including unreported students for the 1996-97 school year and underreported students for the 1997-98 school year.

In the 1998-99 PEIMS submission, school districts were given two choices for reporting enrollment information on all students enrolled in the district at any time during the 1997-98 school year in grades seven through 12:

1. Report a student as enrolled during the current school year, or
2. Report the student as a "leaver" on the leaver record and provide at least one departure reason for that student.

The school leaver report indicates that in many of the larger school districts, schools could not account for significant percentages of their pupils from one year to the next. Yet, rather than counting these "unreported students" as dropouts, the agency chose to disregard these numbers and continued to use official dropout numbers reflected in the data reported.

Many if not most of the "unreported pupils" reflected for many districts were probably dropouts that the new school leaver codes made more difficult to brush under the carpet.

Perhaps for the first time in TEA's history, there was an admission that a significant number of students were not included in the annual dropout counts reported by school districts to the agency. The agency estimated that more than 55,000 students were underreported as dropouts or school leavers.

In the dropout reporting for the 1997-98 school year, the agency used 37 "leaver codes" in three areas: graduate, leaver, and dropout. The number of leaver codes increased from 22 in the 1996-97 school year and earlier. The box on Page 12 compares the various school leaver codes listed by the agency for the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years. The leaver codes give schools more options for categorizing students, which can have the result of further masking the dropout problem.

The findings of the TEA school leaver report are quoted as follows.

- "Thirty-seven leaver reason codes were available to describe the circumstances of each student's departure."
- "New leaver codes include such circumstances as withdrawal to enroll in a private school, withdrawal to attend another public school, withdrawal to attend school out-of-state, withdrawal to be home schooled, and death."
- "Prior to the leaver collection, districts were required to report information on returning students, graduates, and dropouts, but not on other kinds of leavers."
- "Many more students in these grades are being accounted for via the new leaver record reporting requirements. In 1997-98, approximately 3.6 percent of the students who left the system statewide were underreported, whereas for previous years the amount of unreported students was approximately 18.1 percent."
- "Not all students reported in attendance in grades seven through 12 during 1997-98 have leaver or enrollment information from the appropriate district for 1998-99. Although statewide, 3.6 percent of all students in grades seven through 12 the prior year were underreported, for districts with at least 100 students in enrollment (not including charter schools), the percent underreported ranges from 0.0 percent to 59.5 percent."
- "Some students were reported as leavers even though those students had not been reported in attendance or enrollment the prior school year. Thus, this analysis indicated both 'under' and 'over' reporting of the students from the prior year."
- "A significant portion of both the underreported and overreported students can be attributed to personal identification (PID) errors, i.e., student identification inconsistencies that prevent perfect matching of one student record to another record reported for that student. PID errors are usually generated when one or more of the following characteristics do not match the PEIMS PID data base: student ID [either a social security number or state identification number], last name, first name, or date of birth. Because of this, TEA made efforts to reduce the

Attrition Rates - continued on page 13

Texas Education Agency Reported Dropout Rates, by Race-Ethnicity, 1996-97 and 1997-98

School Year/Group	7-12th Grade Enrollment	Total Dropouts	Percent of Total Dropouts	Annual Dropout Rates	Estimated Longitudinal Dropout Rate
1996-97					
White	815,175	7,894	29.4%	1.0%	5.7%
African American	240,142	4,737	17.6%	2.0%	11.3%
Hispanic	603,067	13,859	51.5%	2.3%	13.0%
Other	47,588	411	1.5%	0.9%	5.1%
Total	**1,705,972**	**26,901**	**100.0%**	**1.6%**	**9.1%**
1997-98					
White	828,660	7,734	28.1%	0.9%	Not Available
African American	244,987	5,152	18.7%	2.1%	Not Available
Hispanic	619,855	14,127	51.3%	2.3%	Not Available
Other	49,637	537	1.9%	1.1%	Not Available
Total	**1,743,139**	**27,550**	**100.0%**	**1.6%**	**Not Available**

Source: Texas Education Agency, Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS)

PEIMS Leaver Codes Used in 1996-97 and 1997-98

Leaver Reason	Code	1996-97		1997-98	
		Collected?/ Type	Record Excluded?	Collected?/ Type	Record Excluded?
graduating	01	Graduate	yes	Graduate	yes
deceased	03			Leaver	yes
withdrew, documented enrollment elsewhere in Texas	05			Leaver	yes
official transfer to another Texas public school district	21			Leaver	yes
withdrew, documented enrollment out of Texas	06			Leaver	yes
withdrew, declared intent to enroll out of state	07			Leaver	yes
withdrew/left school, declare intent to enroll in a public school	28			Leaver	yes
withdrew/left school, declared intent to enroll in a private school	29			Leaver	yes
withdrew, home schooling	60			Leaver	yes
withdrew/left school to enter college to pursue a degree	24	Dropout	yes	Leaver	yes
withdrew/left school, declared intent to enter health care facility	30			Leaver	yes
withdrew/ left school, documented return to home country	16	Dropout	yes	Leaver	yes
expelled for criminal behavior	17	Dropout	yes	Leaver	yes
incarcerated in a facility outside the boundaries of the district	61			Leaver	yes
completed graduation requirements except for passing TAAS	19	Dropout	yes	Leaver	yes
withdrew, alternative programs towards completion of GED/diploma	22	Dropout	yes	Leaver	yes
district has documented evidence of student completing GED	31			Leaver	yes
GED previously, returned to school, left again	64			Leaver	yes
graduated previously, returned to school, left again	63			Leaver	yes
removed by Child Protective Services	66			Leaver	yes
withdrawn by ISD	62			Leaver	yes
withdrew/left school to pursue a job	02	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school to join the military	04	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school because of pregnancy	08	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school to marry	09	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school due to alcohol or other drug abuse problems	10	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school because of low or failing grades	11	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school because of poor attendance	12	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school because of language problems	13	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school because of age	14	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school due to homelessness	15	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew to enroll in alternative program	23	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
withdrew/left school to enter college, no evidence of pursing degrees	25	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
expelled for other reasons than criminal behavior	26	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
has not completed graduation requirements, did not pass TAAS	27	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
failed to re-enroll following JJAEN term	65	Dropout	no	Dropout	no
reason unknown	99	Dropout	no	Dropout	no

Source: Texas Education Agency, *1996-97 and 1997-98 Returning and Non-Returning Students in Grades 7-12*, May 14, 1999

Attrition Rates - continued from page 11

number of underreported student attributes to each district by matching records on information other than the PEIMS student identification number."

Other findings of the TEA school leaver report include the following.

- Data on the disposition of duplicated student cases in 1996-97 showed that 69.4 percent of all students in grades seven through 12 were reported as returning students compared to 71.1 percent in 1997-98. Conversely, 30.6 percent of these students were reported as non-returning in 1996-97 as compared to 28.9 percent in 1997-98.
- For unduplicated student counts, 72.8 percent of all students in grades seven through 12 were reported as returning students in 1996-97 compared to 75.1 percent in 1997-98. About 27.2 percent of all students in grades seven through 12 in 1996-97 were reported as non-returning students compared to 24.9 percent in 1997-98.

In a statement, then State Education Commissioner Michael Moses acknowledged the problem with the large number of unreported student records and warned districts that next year's ratings might count these *desaparecidos* (lost pupils) as dropouts.

"The inclusion of these 'unreported pupil' numbers in either this year's or next year's dropout counts would send a shock wave all over the state and perhaps help wake up a populace that has been lulled into thinking that dropout rates are no longer an issue in Texas," commented Dr. Albert Cortez, director of the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership.

What the TEA Report Does Not Say

Interestingly, the TEA report does not provide a full context for assessing the statewide number and percent of students who failed to graduate. Most of the report provides percentages of students returning or not returning without clearly providing the *magnitude* of the number of students reported as graduates, dropouts and other school leavers (see Page 14).

Following are some observations that TEA failed to mention in its school leaver report.

- Of the 1.7 million students in grades seven through 12 in 1996-97, an estimated 464,024 students were classified as "non-returning" students. The 27.2 percent non-returning rate translates into almost a half million students who did not return to the school of record.
- Of the 1.7 million students in grades seven through 12 in 1997-98, an estimated 434,042 students were classified as "non-returning" students. The 24.9 percent non-returning rate translates into almost a half million students who did not return to the school of record.
- The enrollment status of an estimated 245,933 students was not reported by school districts in 1996-97.
- An estimated 55,123 students were underreported as dropouts or school leavers in 1997-98.

These observations are based on the "duplicated student count" data. The school leaver report also included parallel data based on "duplicated student counts."

Without accurate dropout data tied to the accountability system, people can erroneously conclude that the dropout problem is either solved, minimal, or only affects minority students.

Recommendations for Improving State Dropout Accounting

The collection and reporting of accurate longitudinal dropout data is a must. The state of Texas has made significant strides in the development of an accountability system that is receiving national attention as a model of educational accountability. The absence of accurate longitudinal dropout data is serving to undermine this system.

In January of this year, IDRA disseminated its policy brief on the dropout issue in Texas. *Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools* presents an in-depth look at the dropout issue and provides some answers and recommendations for the collection and reporting of "real" numbers of students missing from Texas schools.

In its policy brief, IDRA made the following recommendations for improving state and local dropout identification, counting and reporting procedures.

- ***Revise the goal of the state dropout program to comply with the mandate:*** The goal of the program shall be to reduce the actual statewide *longitudinal* dropout rate to not more than 5 percent, such that a minimum of 95 percent of any class of students enrolling in Texas public schools will receive their high school diploma.
- ***Modify state policy requirements so that a "dropout" is defined as follows:*** A student is defined as a dropout if the student enrolled in Texas public schools does not receive a high school diploma and for whom the state has no proof of re-enrollment in a school within or outside of Texas that has the authority to grant high school diplomas. The definition should *not* include students enrolled in Texas public schools who:
  - are enrolled in school-based General Education Development (GED) programs,
  - have successfully completed all high school course requirements but have not passed the TAAS, and
  - are reported as having returned to their home country, but for whom there is no verification of enrollment by a receiving school.
- ***Require each public school district in Texas, on a yearly basis, to report to the state education agency the number of students enrolled in Texas public schools who:***
  - are enrolled in school-based GED programs,
  - have successfully completed all high school course requirements but have not passed the TAAS, and
  - are reported as having returned to their home country, but for whom there is no verification.

These students should be reported separately and not be included in the dropout definition.

- ***Modify the state education agency procedure for computing the actual state longitudinal dropout rate:*** The following computation is an example of how the rate could be calculated:

  The state longitudinal dropout rate is calculated by determining the total number of students enrolled in Texas public schools in seventh grade and subtracting the total number of those same students receiving a high school diploma five years later, excluding students who will not graduate but are still enrolled in the regular school program that leads to acquiring a high school diploma (such as students who

Attrition Rates - continued on page 15

Percent of Returning and Non-Returning Students in Grades Seven through 12, 1996-97 and 1997-98 (statewide)

Category	1996-97		1997-98	
	Number*	Percent	Number*	Percent
Total Enrollment (Grades 7-12)	1,705,972	100.0	1,743,139	100.0
Disposition of Duplicated Students				
Returning Students	1,183,945	69.4	1,239,372	71.1
Non-Returning Students	522,027	30.6	503,767	28.9
Reported Graduates	172,303	10.1	184,773	10.6
Official Dropouts	25,590	1.5	26,147	1.5
Dropout Records Excluded	15,354	0.9	10,459	0.6
Overreported Students		*na*		*na*
Underreported Students		*na*	62,773	3.6
Unreported Students	308,781	18.1		*na*
Official Leavers		*na*	106,331	6.1
Leaver Records Excluded		*na*	115,047	6.6
Disposition of Unduplicated Students				
Returning Students	1,241,948	72.8	1,309,097	75.1
Non-Returning Students	464,024	27.2	434,042	24.9
Exit Reasons for Non-Returning Students				
Graduate	179,113	38.6	190,110	43.8
Dropout	25,985	5.6	25,174	5.8
Previous Dropout	1,856	0.4	1,736	0.4
College	464	0.1	434	0.1
GED	464	0.1	6,945	1.6
Alternative Program	3,712	0.8	16,060	3.7
In-State Transfer	464	0.1	80,298	18.5
Home Country (return to)	2,320	0.5	6,945	1.6
Completed, no TAAS	1,856	0.4	2,604	0.6
Out-of-State Transfer		*na*	31,685	7.3
Private School		*na*	5,643	1.3
Home School		*na*	7,813	1.8
Incarcerated		*na*	3,906	0.9
Death		*na*	868	0.2
Underreported		*na*	55,123	12.7
Unreported	245,933	53.0		*na*

* The numbers in this table were estimated by IDRA based on total enrollment figures and the corresponding percentages.
na = not applicable
Source: Texas Education Agency, *1996-97 and 1997-98 Returning and Non-Returning Students in Grades 7-12*, May 14, 1999

Attrition Rates - continued from page 13

were retained or do not have sufficient credits), divided by the number of pupils in the original seventh grade group and multiplying by 100 to determine the percentage.

- ***Require that a school district's longitudinal dropout rate be tied to the state's accountability system, the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS):*** A school district must accurately report its longitudinal dropout rate for groups of individual students (cohorts) to the state education agency as it reports each year all other AEIS indicators, which are factored into the district's accountability rating.
- ***Require that each local school district establish local dropout oversight committee(s) or task force(s) including parent representatives, private sector representatives and school staff:*** These committees should regularly and systematically monitor the dropout identification, counting, and reporting process and dropout prevention efforts at their campuses and districts. Such efforts should be part of the regular school program involving regular school staff.
- ***Require that the state education agency establish a site monitoring team that is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the statewide dropout data:*** A trigger mechanism should be developed for the team to review cases where the district attrition rate is more than 10 percent of their reported dropout rate.
- ***Require that the state education agency collect information on the reasons students drop out of school in a way that significantly decreases the number of "unknown" reasons for dropping out:*** Information should also include data on *school-related dropout factors* such as school retention rates, school faculty attrition, credentials and experience, and school per-pupil expenditures.
- ***Require that the state education agency collect and disseminate information on local districts' dropout prevention and recovery efforts:*** This should include proven strategies used and evidence of effectiveness in lowering the dropout rate.

Despite growing concerns about the accuracy in counting and reporting dropout data, the Texas legislature in its most recent session failed to enact any significant legislation to improve the accuracy of methods to count and report dropouts. In order to alleviate some of the pressure on Texas schools with a high number of dropouts and to shadow the concerns about the accuracy of dropout data reported by the state education agency, the Texas legislature provided a special allocation of $85 million to finance special intervention programs for ninth grade students identified as at-risk of dropping out (Cortez, 1999).

With the release of its latest study on the percent of returning and non-returning students, it appears that the state is still more intent on finding ways to *lower the dropout numbers rather than on lowering the number of dropouts*. Without accurate dropout data tied to the accountability system, people can erroneously conclude that the dropout problem is either solved, minimal, or only affects minority students (Robledo Montecel, 1999). The availability of accurate longitudinal data on school dropouts, tied to the Academic Excellence Indicator System, is critical to maintaining the credibility of the school accountability system and to informing urgently needed strategic dropout prevention and recovery efforts.

Resources

Cortez, A. "Texas Legislative Update." *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association, August 1999).

Robledo Montecel, M. *$319 Billion and 1.2 Million Students Lost: Remarks to the State Board of Education Committee on Planning* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, January 7, 1999).

Supik, J. and R. Johnson. *Missing: Texas Youth – Dropout and Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools* (San Antonio: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1999).

Texas Education Agency. *1996-97 and 1997-98 Returning and Non-Returning Students in Grades 7-12* (Austin, May 14, 1999).

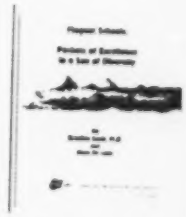
Texas Education Agency. Texas Dropout Rates by Ethnicity. http://www.tea.state.tx.us/research/dropout/9798/appendb/state.html (1998).

Roy Johnson, M.S., directs the IDRA Division of Evaluation Research. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at contact @idra.org.

MAGNET SCHOOLS:

POCKETS OF EXCELLENCE IN A SEA OF DIVERSITY

Bradley Scott, M.A. and Anna De Luna



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One of the only multi-district studies of magnet schools, the book examines 12 important indicators of effectiveness in magnet schools that are used as a strategy for school desegregation. *Pockets of Excellence* reports on 11 magnet school campuses in four school districts in Federal Region VI involving the states of Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. In addition to the information listed above, *Pockets of Excellence* also offers recommendations about effective strategies in the operation of magnet schools that might be adopted by non-magnet schools in desegregated settings as a part of their school improvement and restructuring efforts. Wherever students may be found – regardless of their race, sex, national origin or economic circumstance – they can succeed. What *Pockets of Excellence* demonstrates is that schools with diverse populations can produce success. (ISBN: 1-878550-54-3; 1995; 100 pages; $25)

To order, send check or purchase order to: Intercultural Development Research Association, 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350, San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190; or send purchase order by fax, 210-444-1714. For more information call 210-444-1710 or e-mail: contact@idra.org.

Eleventh Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference

Renaissance Austin Hotel Austin, Texas December 5-8, 1999

In carrying out the theme, *Every Child Is a Soaring Star*, the 11th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network conference will feature a comprehensive program that will provide a dynamic atmosphere, showcasing programs that are effectively being used to work with students in at-risk situations.

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Peter Benson

President of Search Institute, Minneapolis

"Beyond the 'Village' Rhetoric: Creating Healthy Communities for Children and Adolescents"

Dr. Benson leads a staff of 80 social scientists and change agents dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of America's children and adolescents. He is the author of nine books, his most recent titled *All Kids Are Our Kids*. He lectures and speaks widely, serves as a consultant to federal agencies and foundations, and is an adjunct professor of educational policy at the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Mary Montle Bacon

Consultant, Hillsboro, California

"Them that Gots the Gold, Makes the Rules: Achieving Equity and Excellence in a Pluralistic Society"

Dr. Bacon, a private consultant, a former teacher, university instructor, counselor, psychologist and administrator shares her experiences. In addition to the education world, Dr. Bacon has held positions in the juvenile justice system as a probation officer and as a delinquency prevention officer in the California State Attorney General's Office. Just as important, she is a parent who manages to maintain a refreshing sense of humor while addressing the challenges of child rearing in these turbulent times.

Dr. Dudley E. Flood

Retired School Administrator, Raleigh

"Every Child Deserves a Chance to Succeed"

Dr. Flood has taught and been a principal at the elementary and secondary levels. He served in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for 21 years as assistant and associate state superintendent. Most recently he served for five years as executive director of the North Carolina Association of School Administrators. During his career he has received more than 300 awards for civic service.

Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel

Executive Director, Intercultural Development Research Association, San Antonio

"Musical Chairs and Unkept Promises"

Dr. Robledo Montecel's lifetime concern has been with youth, especially youth who are minority, poor or limited-English-proficient. Her advocacy and expertise in education have been instrumental in achieving the goals of excellence and equity in education for students in San Antonio, the nation, and the world. Going against the current deficit model approaches in schools, she champions the value, integrity, and possibilities for all children.

Conference Strands

- Bilingual and Multicultural Issues
- Technology
- Alternative Education Programs
- Current Educational Research: Applications and Utilization
- Parent Involvement
- Juvenile Justice Issues
- Business/Industry Issues and Career Education
- Community/Local Government Issues and Services
- Migrant Education
- Family/Social Issues
- Service Learning

Partners

The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network

Texas Education Agency *in cooperation with*

- Austin Independent School District
- Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin
- Communities In Schools of Texas
- Intercultural Development Research Association
- Pflugerville Independent School District
- Round Rock Independent School District
- Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
- Texas Association for Alternative Education
- Texas Association of School Administrators
- Texas Association of School Boards
- Texas Association of Secondary School Principals
- Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Texas Business and Education Coalition
- Texas Parent/Teacher Association

Registration

You can register for the 11th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network conference by downloading a form from the web site www.dropoutprevention.org and mailing it in or by registering on line. To receive a registration form by mail call 231-933-3962. For more information call Linda Shirley at the NDPC at 864-656-2599.

Questions?

If you have a question about registration, call registration headquarters at 231-933-3962. Questions about the program or any other conference issues should be directed to Linda Shirley at the conference headquarters at 864-656-2599.

Lodging and Travel Information

Participants are responsible for making their own hotel reservations. The conference hotel headquarters is Renaissance Austin Hotel, 9721 Arboretum Boulevard, 512-343-2626; fax 512-346-6364. You can check out the conference hotel headquarters at www.renaissancehotel.com.

Room rates for the conference are: $112-single; $128-double, plus local tax. Individuals should identify themselves as being with the 11th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network conference in order to receive the conference rate. For reservations, call the Renaissance Austin by November 15, 1999, to ensure conference rates. All reservations will be confirmed by the hotel directly to the guest.

To confirm room reservations, a deposit equal to the first night room rate per room is due three weeks prior to arrival. Deposit can be made by major credit cards or check and is refundable up to 48 hours prior to arrival. The conference rate will be honored for one day prior to and one day after the official conference dates. Check-in time is 3:00 p.m., and check-out time is 1:00 p.m.

Ground Transportation in Austin

Other than obtaining a rental car, options for transportation from the new Austin Bergstrom International Airport to the Austin Renaissance Hotel at the Arboretum are:

SuperShuttle – You can make reservations prior to arriving in Austin by dialing their national number 1-800-Blue-Van or you can wait until arriving at the airport, follow signs to Ground Transportation, and book then. The approximate cost for shuttle service is $13 one way.

Taxi service – can be acquired at the Ground Transportation area of the airport. Approximate cost is a minimum of $30 one way.

Conference Airlines

Conference participants desiring discount fares on Delta Airlines, the official air carrier for the conference, should contact Small World Travel (official travel agency for the conference) at 1-800-849-6125.

For a brochure or to find out more about:

- ✓ Detailed agenda
- ✓ Conference fees
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- ✓ Special events
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Visit

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or call

231-933-3962

Lessons Learned *- continued from page 6*

or collecting achievement data presented incredible obstacles. While districts are happy to receive grant funding for special projects, their policies can jeopardize continued funding by not providing student accountability data.

The use of test score data to measure progress of immigrant students is also problematic since many recent immigrant students are excluded from taking the state accountability measure until they attain sufficient levels of English proficiency. Programs for recent immigrant students need to institute assessment systems, such as portfolio assessment, to document student progress in the initial stages of acquiring English oral proficiency and literacy.

Another issue related to the bureaucratic nature of schools is the use of a "one size fits all" approach to policy. **Both at the district and campus levels, policy is framed for mainstream students but must be modified to include special programs for recent immigrants.** Failure to modify policy leads to ludicrous, but all too prevalent, situations where recent immigrants are required to take classes or participate in activities that will not teach them anything or teach what they already know.

For example, the high school course credit system needs to be modified. Students should not be made to sit in ESL classes below their level of English proficiency just to gain course credit. Another failure to modify school policy has led to preliterate newcomers center students sitting through classes on how to take the TAAS test.

In a similar vein, low-schooled immigrant high school students who do not know how to multiply or divide should not be placed in an algebra class due to an inflexible policy. Inattention to modifying policy for immigrant students can also jeopardize the existence of programs, as in the previously discussed case of calculating the student-teacher ratio for a district newcomers center in the spring as opposed to the fall or in the case of stipulating that high schools can only have one writing lab per school.

Special programs need to be built into the district structure from the beginning. Absence of district support and advocacy of special programs slows progress. While starting small and later enlarging the scope of a project is often an effective strategy, outside funding may end before project initiatives are taken to the district level.

The TIEC project had district representatives on the campus implementation teams at both campuses, yet in many cases they served only in an advisory capacity. A more effective strategy is to balance campus-level activities with district-level advocacy for

Lessons Learned *- continued on page 18*

Lessons Learned - continued from page 17
immigrant students. Our experience with the career center project in El Paso ISD provides an excellent example of such a two-pronged approach.

District "buy-in" is essential to the success of special programs at individual campuses. Closely linked to "buy-in" is the issue of coordination of special programs with district initiatives. Ideally, district personnel should become invested in the work of special projects and be encouraged to participate actively rather than viewing them as competing or being at cross-purposes with district programs.

Another issue that relates to the scope of the project is the importance of extending special projects throughout the school. As previously discussed, building a wedge into existing school structures is much less expedient than organizing the school so that immigrant student concerns are integrated throughout the school's management structure, policy and course offerings. **For this reason, projects need to begin by including teachers and administrators outside the ESL department in project activities.**

Perhaps the biggest lesson learned from the TIEC project was that the scope of this project was enormous. Great strides were made in a short amount of time with a small staff. At the completion of the project, advocacy and general awareness of the needs of immigrant students was very high. Two project initiatives were taken to the district level, which attests to their success. When foundation funding ended, it was difficult to distinguish between programs that originated within the TIEC project and those that had their origins within the district, community-based organizations or project partners.

We worked as a collaborative with the common goal of improving the education of immigrant students. From that experience, we learned valuable lessons about how to effectively work in schools with large numbers of immigrant students to develop, implement and sustain appropriate educational programs and services. Those lessons are shared here to assist others who wish to provide the best possible education for immigrant students. They are our future.

Dr. Pam McCollum is a senior education associate in the IDRA Division of Professional Development. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

"Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared" provides information on immigrant education concerning legal issues, effective instructional programs, and educational resources – including Internet listings – for this unique group of students. Copies of the publication may be purchased by sending a check or purchase order to IDRA (ISBN 1-878550-66-7; 53 pages, 1998; $24.95 each).

Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In August, IDRA worked with **8,250** teachers, administrators and parents through **71** training and technical assistance activities and **186** program sites in **12** states plus the United Kingdom. Topics included:

- Bilingual Reading Strategies
- Racial and Gender Bias in Curriculum
- Building School-Family Partnerships
- IDRA Bilingual Programs Evaluation Institute
- Conflict Resolution and Discipline

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- Oklahoma City Public Schools
- Irving Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- Texas Education Service Center, Region I
- West Las Vegas Schools, New Mexico
- Alice ISD, Texas

Activity Snapshot

IDRA and 10 education service centers across Texas recently sponsored a statewide video conference on bilingual education. About 70 parents and educators came together to review effective practices. This event proved to be an innovative opportunity for sharing ideas among educators and parents via live distance learning. Both English and Spanish were spoken, and translations were provided for monolingual participants. The activity also was designed to support the newly emerging Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education. The event itself was sponsored by the *Mobilization for Equity* project at IDRA funded by the Ford Foundation through the National Coalition of Advocates for Students; the IDRA *South Central Collaborative for Equity*, the equity assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve schools in Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas; and the *STAR Center*, the comprehensive regional assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve Texas and a collaboration of IDRA, the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and RMC Research Corporation.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210/444-1710.

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Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education

Attention Bilingual Education Community

IDRA is happy to announce the formation of the Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education. Parents are supporting bilingual education and developing their leadership skills. Several events in the 1999-00 school year are prime opportunities for parents to share information about bilingual education.

Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE)
Annual Conference
October 20-23, 1999
Corpus Christi, Texas

An interactive parent institute focusing on parent leadership for bilingual education is being held in conjunction with the conference. Parents are serving as presenters, facilitators and participants.

National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
Annual Conference
February 15-19, 2000
San Antonio, Texas

The general conference will feature an interactive parent institute on February 18 and 19.

Statewide Bilingual
Video Conference
(Spanish-English)
Early 2000
Date and time to be announced
Education Service Centers

Another video conference is being planned on bilingual education hosted through the Texas education service centers and sponsored by IDRA, bilingual school personnel and parents.

We invite you to participate in and support these efforts in a variety of ways:

1. **Identify parents** with children in bilingual programs to participate in the Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education. We would like names, addresses and phone numbers of parents who value and can attest to the successes of bilingual education.

2. Send us the names of **parent liaisons** and **outreach workers** who recruit parents for these events and disseminate this information.

3. Send us any copies of **parent-friendly** and **bilingual** (if possible) **information**:

   - The rationale for bilingual education
   - The benefits of bilingual education
   - How to identify a good bilingual program
   - The requirements for being a bilingual teacher
   - The skills a good bilingual teacher must have
   - How bilingual education is an effective means of teaching English
   - Various forms or models of bilingual education
   - How a parent can support high quality bilingual education

4. Join these efforts by contacting us and **disseminating this information** to any others who would be interested in participating.

The Parent Coalition for Bilingual Education meets regularly. For information on the meeting dates and times, contact Anna Alicia Romero (e-mail: aromero@idra.org) or Aurelio M. Montemayor (e-mail: amontmyr@idra.org).

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Great Results - *continued from page 5*

majority of his time helping his students with their math and, as a result, has sharpened his own math skills as well. Rich feels that his tutees are experiencing the same problems he did as a young student, and wants to show them that through education, their situations will improve. He wants to set a good example for his tutees, "I see the tutees with the same problems I used to have and how it's so important for them to get help so they can continue their education and get better."

Rich explains that though his job as a tutor can be difficult at times, his fifth-grade students make him happy. He says that these tutees have more difficulty paying attention, so he must be versatile in dealing with them. He has been forced to develop new ways to earn the interest of his tutees and is proud to report that his new style of teaching is producing great results. He feels that it is necessary to develop a delicate balance of fun and discipline in order to help the student *want* to learn.

Rich gets support from his friends and family. He says that his parents and grandmother are very proud of his involvement in the program and have noticed many differences in his attitude at home. Rich feels that he now gives his elders more respect. Thanks to his work as a tutor, Rich says that he now understands how difficult it is to be a caregiver for young children and prides himself in his newly found sense of patience.

Rich believes that his success as a tutor can be attributed to his thorough preparation. He says that he prepares himself both mentally and physically for his daily meetings with his tutees. He also feels that his love for his new profession gives him a personal strength that can be seen while he works with his students. "Only an emergency will keep me from seeing my tutees every day."

"Only an emergency will keep me from seeing my tutees every day."

– a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor in Houston, Texas

Rich plans to use the money he earns from his work as a tutor to open a savings account. He also says that he will use a portion of his wages to purchase any personal affects that he may need in order to relieve his grandmother, whom he lives with, of a financial burden, "I try to give my paycheck to my grandmother to pay bills when she needs it." He says it makes him feel good to know that he is in a position to help his family.

Rich says he will hold a special place in his heart for his teacher coordinator because no matter what the circumstances, she always helped them get into the spirit of their job. Rich says that he enjoyed helping his tutees improve their education, and has felt a great deal of personal satisfaction because of it.

Although Rich has always planned on completing high school, he says that the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has helped him to make his education a priority, "I feel that school is a lot more important now."

If Rich was to offer advice to future tutors, he would tell them to always "keep their cool." He says that his short temper is now a thing of the past and feels he is an example of how much a person can change given the right circumstances. He also says that tutors must always think about what they say in advance because they are setting a very important example for these young students, "The tutees see you as a friend, and a role model, so it's important that the tutors behave."

Looking Forward

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program will continue to benefit thousands of students into this new millennium, reaching a record 210 schools across the globe during this next school year.

Josie Danini Supik, M.A., coordinates IDRA's materials development. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at contact@idra.org.

Help Us Save Paper!

If duplicate or unwanted copies of the *IDRA Newsletter* are sent to your address, please notify us so that we can correct our mailing list. You can send us e-mail at contact@ idra.org or return the mailing label on this newsletter with corrections marked by mail or fax (210-444-1714)! Thank you!

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